

What does it mean “to hate?”

In this week’s reading from *Parashat Vayeshev* (*Shemot / Genesis 37:1-40:23*) we learn that Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers (37:3, וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִכָּל-בְּנָיו). Joseph had a dream about his future (37:5-10) told his brothers and they became jealous (37:11). As the narrative continues, Joseph’s brothers are plotting murder in their hearts (37:18-22) but instead put him into a pit (37:23) and then sell him into slavery to the Ishmaelites (37:27-29).

This week’s Parashah primarily discusses Joseph the eleventh son born to Jacob and the son of Rachael. The narrative tells us that Jacob showed Joseph favoritism over his brothers (וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִכָּל-) (בְּנָיו כִּי-בֶן-זִקְנִים) saying that he loved him more. This favoritism led to Jacob using Joseph to bring him news of his brothers, whether good or bad. Though Joseph was spoiled by Jacob, we are told that he walked in righteousness (וַיִּצְדָּקָה) and justice (מִשְׁפָּט) more so than his brothers. The Scriptures tell us that the Lord was with Joseph (וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת-יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ) (מִצְלָיִחַ) prospering him and preparing him for the future survival of Israel.

According to the narrative, Joseph’s brothers were grazing their flocks in Shechem. Previously in Parashat Vayishlach, Simeon and Levi killed all of the men living in the city of Shechem after having tricked them into being circumcised. Jacob moved away from Shechem following the rape of Dinah and the murder of the men of Shechem. However, the sons of Jacob continued to return to Shechem to feed their flock. Interestingly, the Talmud Bavli Shabbat 63a states,

Talmud Bavli Shabbat 63a

Mishnah: Aman may not go out with a sword, nor with a bow, nor with a shield, nor with a round shield, nor with a spear. If he has gone out [with any of these] he is liable for a Chattat.

Based upon the narrative, the sons of Jacob returned to a place of the sword and sexual sin. The Talmud Bavli Shabbat 63a would conclude that the brothers continued return to a place of sexual sin and death makes

them liable for a Chattat (חטאת). Rightly so, Jacob was worried about his sons and the Torah indicates that Joseph would return with a bad report enumerating their sins. For this reason his brothers hated him and we are told that they could not speak peaceably to him.

ספר בראשית פרק לז Bereshit / Genesis 37:1-4

א וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִגְוָרֵי
אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן: ב אֵלֶּה |
תְּלִדֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן-שִׁבְעֵ-
עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה הָיָה רֹעֶה אֶת-
אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נֶעַר אֶת-בְּנֵי
בְּלֵהָה וְאֶת-בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׂי אָבִיו
וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת-דִּבְתָּם רָעָה אֶל-
אֲבִיהֶם: ג וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶהָב אֶת-
יוֹסֵף מִכָּל-בְּנָיו כִּי-בֶן-זִקְנִים
הוּא לוֹ וַעֲשָׂה לוֹ כְּתוּנַת פָּסִים:
ד וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי-אֶהָב
אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל-אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׁנְאוּ אֹתוֹ
וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלָם:

37:1 Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. 37:2 These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. 37:4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. (NASB)

The Torah portion opens saying *37:1 Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. 37:2 These are the records of the generations of Jacob...* Rashbam opens in his commentary on *Bereshit / Genesis 37:2* saying the following,

Rashbam on Genesis 37:2

Those who love pure reason should always remember that the sages have said a Biblical passage must not be deprived of its plain meaning. Because the main point of Torah comes to teach us and tell us in hints found in the plain meaning of the text, the hagadot, and halachot and laws derived through lengthy words and the 32 and 13 laws by which we derive law from the text of the Torah. The Rishonim, because of their piety busied themselves

interesting is how only Joseph is mentioned by name, and Moshe writes of only the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, the slave girls who became Jacob's wives after having been married to Leah and Rachael. (*Bilhah and Zilpah were given to Jacob for the purpose of bearing more children.*) The manner in which the “*generations*” (תּוֹלְדוֹת) is described here is distinctly different from previous designations of the generations which lists out the names of one's descendents. What is the Torah trying to tell us here?

The rabbis have the following to say concerning this observation on the “*generations*” (תּוֹלְדוֹת) in *Bereshit / Genesis 37:2*.

Radak on Genesis 37:2, 1

אלה תולדות יעקב, *the meaning of the word תולדות in our context here is “happenings, developments.” It includes all kinds of traumas Yaakov would experience. Genesis 6:9 similarly introduced what happened to Noah with these words. The philological bridge to the word תולדות when it refers to biological progeny is Proverbs 27:1 כי לא תדע מה ילד היום ילד היום.* “for you do not know what the day will give birth to.”

Radak interprets the word toldot (תּוֹלְדוֹת) to say that this refers to “*happenings, developments*” occurring in Jacob's life rather than to provide a list of the generations. He parallels the generations to Noah (ט אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדַרְתּוֹ אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים הַתְּהַלְלָה-נֹחַ:) that this was the happenings, developments, or situation of Noah, that the word toldot (תּוֹלְדוֹת) does not always refer to the biological progeny. Radak says this is how the word toldot (תּוֹלְדוֹת) is being used here to reference the traumatic life of Jacob. This is further explained in his comments in Part 6 on the Torah Portion as follows.

Radak on Genesis 37:2, 6

ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה, *he told his father that his brothers hated him, i.e. both the sons of the former servant maids with whom he was being raised, as well as the sons of Leah to whom he felt superior because he enjoyed preferential treatment by his father. As a result, the brothers sought pre-*

texts to treat him meanly. Yaakov was angry at the brothers on behalf of Joseph, interpreting the brothers' hatred of Joseph as jealousy due to his loving Joseph excessively. (verses 3 and 4). In Bereshit Rabbah 84:7 we are told that according to Rabbi Meir Joseph told his fathers that the brothers were suspect of violating the commandment not to eat flesh from a still living animal, whereas Rabbi Yehudah is supposed to have said that Joseph accused them of treating the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah with disdain, referring to them as "slaves." Rabbi Shimon is reported as saying that Joseph accused the brothers of casting lustful glances at the local Canaanite girls. Rabbi Yehudah bar Seymon claims that G'd repaid Joseph for all three accusations as we derive from Proverbs 16:11 פֶּלֶס וּמֵאזְנֵי מִשְׁפָּט , לה' "Honest scales and weights are the Lord's." G'd said to him: "you accused your brothers of violating the law of אָבֵר מִן הַחַי , you will be a witness that even when they were engaged in a sinful enterprise such as dipping your cloak in blood before presenting it to your father, they first slaughtered the male goat ritually, as is required when they would eat it. You accused them of calling the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah slaves, that is why you yourself were sold into slavery (Psalms 105:17) You accused your brothers of looking lecherously at the local girls, I will cause you to be tempted by this very phenomenon." This is why the Torah described the wife of Potiphar attempting to seduce Joseph (39,7)

The commentary continues trying to explain what was going on between the brothers and specifically in the toldot (תְּלִדוֹת) only Joseph is mentioned by name, and his brothers are mentioned as *"the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wive."* Moshe writes of only the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. The idea is that being sons of slave girls, his brothers are some how lesser, as opposed to Joseph being greater, being born to the one to whom Jacob loved the most. Jacob's excessive love and favoritism of Joseph caused his brothers to hate him. The bad report or accusations

Joseph brought was due to the brothers being “*the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah.*”

Other Jewish commentators (Rashi and Sforno) also note the amount of anger between Joseph and his brothers in their commentaries.

Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 37:2

Any bad which he saw in his brothers the children of Leah he told his father. [He told Jacob] they ate from a living animal, that they insulted the sons of the maids (Bilha and Zilpa) calling them slaves, and that they were suspected of illicit relationships and was punished with all three. For [saying that they] ate from a living animal, they slaughtered a goat when they sold him and did not eat it alive. For slandering them that they called their brothers slaves, he was sold as a slave and for the sexual slanders, his masters wife laid eyes on him etc.

Sforno on Bereshit / Genesis 37:3, 3

ועשה לו כתונת פסים, as a visible sign that Joseph was intended by him to become the leader of all the brothers both at home and in the field. The use of such distinctive clothing to symbolize someone's elevated stature is found also in Isaiah 22:21 והלבשתיו כתנתך, “I will dress him (Chilkiyah) in your tunic,” where it signals that authority is transferred to the one wearing the appropriate garments. (uniform). The Talmud Baba Kama 11 also confirms that authority is signaled by the attire worn by people possessing it. [there the brothers who had paid extra for their leader to represent them and to appear well dressed are quite content seeing that their representative while attired in costly garments will indirectly confer benefits upon them through their brother being listened to in the councils of the city. Ed.]

The rabbinic commentaries state, the accusations Joseph brings against his brothers is regarding their disobedience to the command of God in the suspected illicit relationships that was occurring (Rashi). Sforno states

that the visible sign Jacob gave to his son of the multi-colored coat, was that he was to become their leader. The rabbis conclude in the Talmud (*Baba Kama 11*) that one's clothing designates his authority. Therefore, his brothers were jealous of him because of their father's favoritism. Favoritism is the act of partiality or bias. To show favoritism is to give preference to one person over others with equal claims. This is similar to discrimination and may be based on conditions such as social class, wealth, clothing, actions, etc.

The Scriptures clearly state that favoritism is not God's will for our lives, the primary reason is that the Lord God Himself does not show favoritism (*Romans 2:11*). Paul said in *Ephesians 6:9* "*There is no favoritism with him*" and in *Colossians 3:25* of the Lord's fairness in judgment saying, "*Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*" James said "*My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism*" (*James 2:1*). The context concerns the treatment of the rich and poor where James points out that treating someone differently based on his financial status or how he is dressed is wrong.

James 2:1-10

2:1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2:2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 2:3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, 'You sit here in a good place,' and you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,' 2:4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? 2:7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall

love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. 2:9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (NASB)

The Torah provides similar instruction regarding favoritism according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:15* “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly” and in *Shemot / Exodus 23:3* “Do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.” Justice is to be blind to both the rich and poor, all people should be treated equally before the law. James further comments, *2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. 2:9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. (NASB)* Favoritism is a serious offense against God’s call to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

In this week’s Torah portion, there was definitely something going on between the sons of Jacob and Joseph based upon the way the MT is written, and the words, תְּלִדוֹת יַעֲקֹב | אֵלֶּה “*these are the generations of Jacob...*,” where only Joseph is mentioned by name, and his brothers are mentioned as “*the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah.*” Joseph dreamed two dreams, told these dreams to his brothers, and they said to one another. “*Behold, here comes the master of dreams. Come let us kill him, let us throw him into one of the pits and say that a wild beast ate him. Then we shall see what becomes of his dreams.*” The MT states that Joseph’s brothers hated him. Some questions we can ask is, What does it mean “*to hate?*” Have you ever hated anyone? Is it possible to love and hate someone at the same time?

Notice the significance of favoritism in the Torah, one son is favored over the others, and there is tension, jealousy, and eventual estrangement within the family. In Parashat Vayeshev, Joseph brings “*bad reports*” about the brothers to their father, and they see Jacob giving Joseph special treatment, such as his “*ketonet passim*” (כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים, a multi-colored cloak). The brothers are angry, jealous, and resentful, and thus alienated from one another. This is illustrated based upon the way the MT is written, how the words, תְּלִדוֹת יַעֲקֹב | אֵלֶּה “*these are the generations of Jacob...*” and

Moshe only mentioning Joseph by name, and his brothers as “*the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives.*” The significance of this week’s portion is in the Torah’s description of the emotional state of the resentful brothers. The Torah states, **ד וַיִּרְאוּ אֶחָיו כִּי-אֶתוֹ אָהַב אָבִיהֶם מִכָּל-** *37:4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. (NASB)* specifically, **וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלֵם:** “*they could not speak with him peaceably.*” Rashi says they didn’t speak with him at all, whereas other commentators say that they spoke to Joseph resentfully, or spoke amongst themselves in non-peaceful ways against Joseph. This much is true based upon the Torah Portion and what they did to their brother. Rashi tries to give the brothers a little bit of credit by pointing out they were not hypocrites because they did not pretend to love him while hating him in their hearts. They hated Joseph and were not afraid to say so, and then followed through by their actions. It’s not difficult to understand their anger and jealousy since their father had given Joseph special gifts, and for many years had loved Joseph’s mother (Rachel) more than the mothers of the other brothers. Furthermore, Joseph seems to think of himself as special and privileged, by the way he reports to his father about his brothers. In addition, Joseph is described as “*the son of Jacob’s old age,*” **ג וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אָהַב אֶת-יֹסֵף מִכָּל-בָּנָיו כִּי-בֶן-זְקֵנִים הוּא)** (לוֹ וְעָשָׂה לוֹ כְּתוּנַת פָּסִים:), which suggests that Jacob gave Joseph a special relationship. Note that in the ancient world, the oldest child was the one who got the special privileges, however throughout the book of Genesis this role is reversed, where the younger receives the blessings, and the life of Jacob may have also had a part in his partiality towards Joseph (being the youngest) as compared to his brothers. So what does the Torah mean to teach us by saying they could not speak to him in peace?

In the brothers statement, **וְלֹא יָכְלוּ דַבְּרוֹ לְשָׁלֵם** “*they could not speak with him peaceably,*” we are told they gave free reign to their resentment, and that their resentment ruled over them. They allowed themselves to be filled with their anger, it ruled them, and led them down a path of performing great sins. This week’s Torah portion speaks to us to be careful of hatred and the hatred of others, that is born out of pain, feelings of rejection, and jealousy. The danger is that this hatred may turn into something worse that may lead to all sorts of sins, even to the possibility

of murder. It is with this in mind that Paul wrote in *Ephesians 4:24-27*, *4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. 4:25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 4:26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 4:27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.* (NASB) In this way, we are called in the Messiah Yeshua, to be good to one another, to speak the truth, and to not let the sun go down on our anger, for there is the possibility that one's anger will lead to greater sin.

